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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application Designated Contact Person

Please provide the Executive Office of Education with the following information identifying a designated contact person for the group submitting an application for charter school status. This form *must* be filed along with the charter school application no later than February 15, 1994. Please mail all required materials to:

Secretary of Education
ATTN: Charter Schools
Executive Office of Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Tel: (617) 727-1313

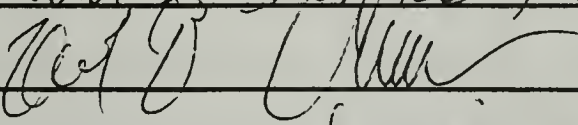
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Please print or type:

Nantucket Charter School Application Committee

Name of organization/group filing for charter school status

Contact Person Name:	David B. Voorhees, M.D.
Signature:	 Date: 1/26/1994
Title:	Committee Chairman
Address:	57 Prospect St.
City:	Nantucket
State:	MA
Zip:	02554
Telephone:	508-228-7798
Fax:	

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application

I/We, the undersigned charter school applicant(s), do hereby certify that the information provided herein and filed with the Executive Office of Education on this the 26th day of JAN (month) of the year 1994, is to the best of my/our knowledge, truthful and accurate.

(This signature sheet *must* be attached to the application when it is filed.)

Name: <u>George Metcalfe</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>1/25/94</u>
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If more space is required, please attach additional sheets.

Executive Office of Education, One Ashburton Place, Room 1401, Boston, MA, 02108

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application

I/We, the undersigned charter school applicant(s), do hereby certify that the information provided herein and filed with the Executive Office of Education on this the _____th day of _____(month) of the year 1994, is to the best of my/our knowledge, truthful and accurate.

(This signature sheet *must* be attached to the application when it is filed.)

Name: <u>Suzanne Grossman</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>1/30/94</u>
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If more space is required, please attach additional sheets.

Executive Office of Education, One Ashburton Place, Room 1401, Boston, MA, 02108

February 11, 1994

Nantucket New School
45 Surfside Road
PO Box 696
Nantucket, MA 02554
508/228-8569

Piedad F. Robertson
Secretary of Education
ATTN: Charter Schools
Executive Office of Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Secretary Robertson:

We propose to convert an existing private non-profit elementary school into a public Charter School.

Nantucket Island's rather extreme isolation makes it very important that some alternative to the public school exist. Nine years ago the Nantucket New School was created by a group of parents; it has been well received and has grown from an initial enrollment of six to twenty-five students. Tuition is scaled and has been kept as low as possible, but there are still families who would like their children to attend but are precluded from this financially. We propose to end this exclusion by becoming a public school while maintaining our own character and philosophy.

The present school owns the building that houses it, which has been altered to conform with the current building codes and is approved as a school building. This is located almost directly across from the public elementary school, enabling some sharing of facilities. If our proposal is accepted, the board of the New School would dissolve the private school and be willing to rent the building to the new board of the Nantucket Charter School.

The availability of a functioning school building together with a cadre of willing parents and experienced teachers should improve the outlook for success of the Charter School, and should also provide an experimental arena for the public school. Enrollment is projected to increase, gradually, to forty and then fifty or sixty. We realize that these are very small numbers, but the entire island school system is small, which has created its own problems of entrenchment and resistance to change.

We wish to be candid in that we do not believe that the proposed funding for charter schools would work in our small community, and hope that some alternative method may become available. Unlike Martha's Vineyard, we have only one town, one county, and one school district. In addition, it is well to remember that we are thirty miles out to sea, and there is no other alternative to the public school here.

Briefly, we believe in more structure than exists in the present public school, together with flexible groupings that allow children to progress at their own rates, at the same time being brought together daily into what is essentially a one-room-school-house atmosphere. We have been successful as a private school, as evidenced by achievement test scores and reports from former students and the schools they subsequently attend; we would like an opportunity to try to influence the educational community, as a whole.

We would be delighted to have you visit with us at any time.

Sincerely,

David B. Voorhees, M.D.

David Voorhees, M.D.
Parent, Nantucket New School,
and the members of the Nantucket New School interested in founding a Charter School

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CHARTER APPLICATION: PART I

1. Mission Statement:

We are determined in our efforts to make a superior and stimulating academic and creative education available to as many qualified students as possible, as inexpensively as possible. We intend to maintain a school with a small student/teacher ratio, in which respectful, calm, and thoughtful behavior is the norm. In addition, we recognize a need to bring an unusually worldly-aware perspective to our students, to compensate for our isolation.

2. School Objectives:

- A. Our broad academic objectives are to develop students who enjoy learning, who utilize both the creative and analytical areas of their brains, who are self-motivated, and who will become thoughtful, questioning adults.
- B. Our non-academic goals emphasize considerate, trustful, and respectful behavior among students and faculty.
- C. We expect that parents, students, faculty, and board members will function as a co-operative unit, and that each will respect what the others are able to contribute to the school. We emphasize communication among all the groups.

3. Statement of Need:

- A. The public school is the only other choice, on Nantucket, and it would be difficult for even the best school to suit everyone's needs. On this island, the public school is a monopoly, and that is rarely a healthy situation.
- B. We have been able to initiate successful approaches that, for a variety of reasons, the public school has not. In general, our students function on a level one to two grades above public school students of the same age. We feel that a small student/teacher ratio is essential to our ability to function successfully.

4. School Demographics:

- A. The Parents' Cooperative purchased a building within a block of the public elementary school, a year and a half ago.
- B. This has proven to be a very suitable location. It has enabled some of our students to take some classes at the public school.
- C. We do now, and intend to continue to serve a cross-section of the Nantucket population.
- D. With increases in appropriate faculty, we would expect eventually, to have approximately fifty students, though we would need to do this in gradual increments, in order to maintain the effective functioning of the school.
- E. At the moment we go from PK to seventh grade, and will gradually continue through high school if there are enough parents and students to make this feasible. We have about ten students in a group now, but would prefer to increase faculty, and cut that down to six or seven.

5. Recruiting & Marketing Plan:

- A. There are articles about us in both local papers, periodically, and the local television station has run a few interviews with us. Our fund-raising events also serve to make the public aware of our existence. We usually advertise openings for students in the papers in July, but most parents hear of us by word of mouth.
- B. If we were to become a charter school, it would obviously be a newsworthy event, and would be publicized accordingly.

6. Admissions Policy:

- A. Our admissions committee has previously been made up of two teachers and a parent. Up until now, our primary basis for admission was the strong desire of both students and parents, to be a part of the school. We know that self-motivated, bright children do best in the environment we provide, but we've had many children come in who didn't at all appear to be so when we interviewed them, and later became so. We expect that if we are faced with more students than we can handle, we will develop a first-come-first-served approach, with a clearly defined trial period outlined. We've found that when students are not suitable to the school, usually they and their parents make that decision before we have to take any steps. Our ability to handle handicapped students is dependant upon the scope of our faculty, and whether or not the situation would interfere with the learning of the majority of our students. We have handled some students with learning disabilities effectively, and others, because of their detrimental effect upon their fellow students, have not been successful. Blind or deaf children, for example, would not be a problem; severe autism would.
- B. This type of an approach provides every one with an equal opportunity.

7. Profile of Founding Coalition:

- A. The precursor of the group applying for a charter was made up of parents, board members, and teachers of The Parents' Cooperative of Nantucket (Nantucket New School) founded in 1984 by the present directing teacher and a small group of parents.
- B. The founding parents and teacher developed the cooperative eight years ago because they were unhappy with what the public school had to offer. The Board now includes parents, teachers, and community members. Many parents also have children attending the public school, and are active in both institutions, and some of our students attend some classes at the public school. New School parents represent the community at large. The majority are in the trades, but there are also merchants and professionals.
- C. As a charter school, we would expect to continue with the same type of parent involvement that we've always had. We would plan to expand the number of non-parent board members.

8. Timetable:

- A. We will open mid-September, 1994, whether or not we are a charter school. If we are granted charter status our present faculty would spend the summer recruiting students and teachers, and teacher training.
- B. The only real obstacle we see to opening as a charter school in the fall of 1994 are the financial inequities stated in the cover letter.

9. Evidence of Support:

- A. The New School has been in existence for nine years, and has grown steadily. Social support is evidenced by the willingness of parents to pay tuition and to contribute time and effort to the cooperative. One fund-raiser is held yearly, and the thousands of dollars contributed by local merchants in the form of goods and services is further evidence of community support. Our parents and teachers frequently report inquiries from other families who feel they cannot take the tuition cost from their family budget.
- B. The community at large is friendly toward the New School in its present form. To be perfectly honest, however, it is very doubtful that community leaders and town officials will support the idea of a Charter School on Nantucket because of the added cost to the community. The Charter School would be expected to attract an average of five students from each of grades K-7; this would be insufficient to afford any economies to the public school such as need for fewer teachers. As presently legislated, it would simply mean that they would be assessed an additional \$250,000 for the Charter School students and would presumably either have to take this from or add it to their budget. This cannot realistically be expected to be met with enthusiasm. This problem worries us greatly. We presently have a lukewarm but workable relationship with the Community School which enables our students to participate to some small degree in several programs. This would be destroyed by any antagonism. We feel that the funding mechanism proposed is not workable for a small community such as ours.

10. Educational Program:

- A. Our primary educational philosophy is to introduce children to as much as we think they can handle, to encourage them to communicate their reactions, and to back off when there is an indication that it is too much.

We start our four-year-olds reading as soon as they're able. We feel that in this era of families with two wage-earners, even the most intellectual parents spend little time reading with, or in front of their children. Therefore, there are rarely role model readers. If children learn to read when they are six or seven, their abilities lag far behind their interests and they soon become discouraged. With no role models to intervene, more accessible entertainment such as television can, understandably, take over. Writing is taught simultaneously, and they seem to reinforce each other.

The approach in mathematics, is much the same. The faculty is guided not by what ought to be taught at a certain age, but what the children enjoy learning and are able to absorb. "Math-phobia" seems non-existent.

Our youngest groups have classes broken down into disciplines, just as the eldest do, and often they are in the same general area, so that an inter-age communication exists.

Although arts for the most part are taught in the afternoon, we try to emphasize the fact that we feel that these classes are equally important. There are often homework assignments involved, and the approach is strongly academic.

Classes are arranged according to ability, rather than age level. This allows us to shift children into situations in which they can absorb at their own speed and ability. It discourages the development of age/grade prejudices, and allows them to learn from each other in an open-minded fashion.

All teachers teach all grade levels, and teach the same students year after year. This results in a deeper understanding of each student's abilities and needs, and little is neglected in the effort to assure that each child comes close to his or her potential.

Homework is assigned nightly, as soon as children are reading. In most cases it quickly becomes automatic, and they easily learn to manage their time effectively. Because students have been in classes in which the emphasis has been on learning being its own reward, they tend to become people who enjoy learning, and who seek out what information they can glean, no matter what the situation. We analyze anything we intend to offer during the school day, to make sure it is a worthwhile addition to the curriculum, academically and/or socially and emotionally, and we make sure it can't be done as easily at home without teacher supervision. We feel that children learn in a variety of ways. We present as many different modes of learning as we can so that children can gravitate to those which are most satisfying and productive for them. On a broader level, we hope we have absorbed the best of a variety of educational philosophies, and we continue to look for ways of improving ours.

We are as concerned with the children's social and emotional behavior as we are with academics. Earned respect among students and faculty is an assumption. Unmannerly or hurtful behavior is not tolerated. Since we expect students to be well-behaved, we also discuss in depth, what makes children misbehave. Because of this, students tend to have a mature understanding of the cruelty they may see in others. They often react to it with this understanding, rather than becoming hurt and defensive. Although we don't think noise, in itself, is evil, we do feel that most children function better in a quiet atmosphere, and therefore the school, in general, is quiet and orderly. We try to phrase our corrections positively, but feel that an occasional negative serves an important purpose, too. We encourage self-motivation, rather than a reliance on teacher reinforcement for motivation. The closeness provided by a low student/teacher ratio, and constant faculty attention seem to make students exacting about self-expectations, and secure in their abilities. Our strong drama program also develops this security, as well as a useful lack of self-consciousness.

We are concerned with having students develop a balance between left and right brain functions. We try to make sure that analytical and creative exercises are equally emphasized. Students have at least two art classes, weekly, as well as drama and music. There is a continual effort to have them make connections among various areas of study, and to have them understand that what they learn in class should become a part of their lives. This encouragement to think creatively enables them to handle problems and challenges with a broader perspective.

- B. We hope we have taken the best from Montessori, Steinert, and the traditional public school approach. We feel the Montessorian concept of giving the best materials to the youngest is very important, and go one step further in feeling that the best teachers, also, need to go to our youngest students. We also believe that children should be taught at their own speed. We've incorporated the Steinert emphasis on creativity, and the emphasis that used to exist in traditional public schools, on developing basic skills and maintaining a decorous classroom.
- C. School runs from mid-September to Memorial Day. The full co-op decides on the yearly calendar, and it usually follows the public school's; the one exception is that we don't take a spring vacation. The school day begins at 7:30 for the eldest. Groups arrive at specific staggered times until 8:45, when the youngest group comes in. The day is over at 2:45.

11. Student Performance:

- A. The routine testing we do is used more to reinforce information, than to assess students' progress. The size of our classes makes the latter evident, daily. Students keep portfolios of written work, so that they, too, are aware of their progress.
- B. The faculty is always available to work after school with students who are having difficulty.
- C. (See A.)

12. School Evaluation:

- A. We do standardized testing yearly, from kindergarten on up, not because we think these tests are particularly worthwhile, but because we know that until the system changes, the children will have to deal with them all their lives. In general, most of our students are in the eighty to ninety percentile of the national average. Although we don't feel these scores really reflect what we're teaching, they do assure us that we're at least on track in terms of the rest of the country. In addition, most of our students who have returned to the public school, have been a grade level ahead.
- B. We write lengthy evaluations and schedule parent conferences mid-year. We write shorter evaluations at the end of the year, and parent conferences, then, are optional. Parents (and students) are encouraged to call the faculty with any questions, concerns, or suggestions. The faculty sees most parents daily, when they pick up their children; concerns are often discussed then. Parents often send in notes asking the faculty to call them. They may, of course, schedule a conference at any point. The director sends a weekly newsletter home which chronicles the events of the previous week, keeps parents abreast of general events, and warns parents when exams or long-range homework assignments are due.

13. Human Resource Information:

- A. We hope to continue to use a minimum of administration; thus far we have found that this can be done by division of duties among the teachers, with secretarial support, as well as advice from the parents and the board. We do not envision any full-time administrative positions. Our staff is presently composed of both certified and uncertified teachers. We will not have certification as a requirement since this often excludes well-qualified and gifted teachers. Selection of staff will be primarily the responsibility of the directing teacher in consultation with the faculty and the governing board, with the final decision made by the board. We intend to maintain as close as a seven-to-one student/teacher ratio as possible.
- B. The faculty is evaluated in an on-going fashion, through constant communication, by the parents, the students, each other, and themselves. There are faculty meetings weekly. The older students have a forum, monthly, and are required to come prepared with criticisms and suggestions. Parents are surveyed about planned changes, and most do not seem hesitant to voice their questions and concerns.

- C. The directing teacher earns approximately \$28,000 yearly, and the second teacher, who has been with the school for four years, earns \$21,000. There are no additional benefits. The faculty would like to take part in some of the educational conferences and workshops offered, but because of the island location, costs are prohibitive. If we were to become a charter school, one of the first things we'd do is to plan several trips which would allow us to observe what similar schools are doing.

14. School Governance:

- A. The teaching director is responsible to the Board of Directors, and is responsible for the additional faculty. The Board of Directors is responsible to the full cooperative.
- B. The basis of the Board of Directors of the proposed Charter School will be initially elected from the Charter School applicants (five parents, two teachers, and three community members), and will suggest perspective members to the cooperative, and they will make the final decisions.
- C. The Board is responsible for the financial and physical running of the school, and for setting policy.
- D. There are two full-cooperative meetings, yearly, during which the Board makes the group aware of changes and plans.
- E. The curriculum is decided upon by the directing teacher and faculty, but suggestions are constantly made by students and parents, and are more often than not, put into effect. We have had student representatives who observe at meetings, and could make the Board aware of student concerns, if necessary, but these are generally handled more directly during Student Forum meetings.

15. Building Options:

- A. Nantucket New School presently owns and occupies a building diagonally across from, and within a few hundred yards of the public elementary school.
- B. The building consists of three stories and five main rooms, with further supplementary space. This was originally designed as a health club, and was acquired two years ago by the New School, and converted suitably; it has been passed by the local building inspector for use as a school.
- C. Since this building is owned by the Board of the New School, the Board would remain in existence for the purposes of leasing the building to the Charter School Board. This has been approved by the present board, contingent upon acceptance of this proposal. Lease terms, of course, would be determined by the amount needed to cover the mortgage and retiring a small amount of related debt, and would be estimated at less than \$20,000, yearly.